

# if you know what I mean



Joseph Easton McDougall

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if you know what  
I mean



# if you know what I mean

*By*

JOSEPH EASTON McDOUGALL



TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF  
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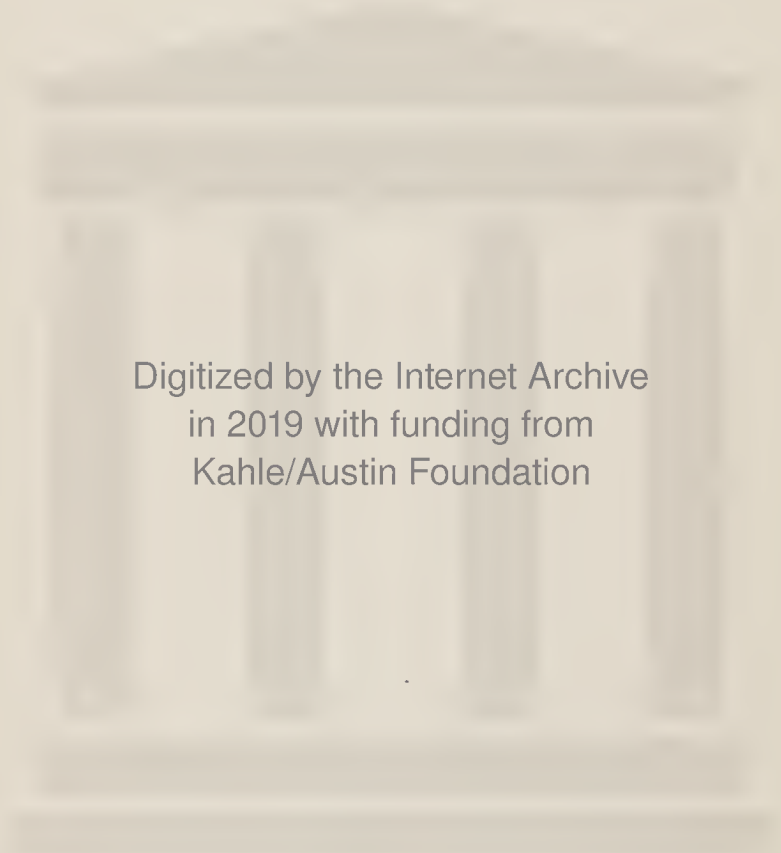
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*To several nice people  
of whom I am very fond.*

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I mean



*On First Looking into the National  
Geographic Magazine*

WOULD I were in far Zambezi,  
Out where life is free and easy,  
Where the moral code quite lax is  
And they have no income taxes,  
Where they need no liquor vendors  
And the men don't wear suspenders,  
Four-plus-fours or mauve pyjamas,  
And the great big chocolate mammas  
Can be bought for twenty goats or  
Less. They never need new coats or  
Hats. You sort 'em and you grade 'em;  
When they're getting old you trade 'em  
For a keg of good corn licker.  
Life goes smoother there and quicker,  
Free from wise-cracks, bores and poses.  
There they have no halitosis  
And the big rhinoceroses  
Play at Ring Around the Roses  
All night long or with their noses  
Scratch your back if you disposes.

## *Holiday Afternoon*

I SAT upon the extra seat  
And she sat in the middle,  
Between Professor Deeper and  
The poet, Barton Biddle.  
The road spun like a river bright,  
Through many a leafy mile.  
But, being with such clever folk,  
She was afraid to smile.

“For beauty is,” so said the first,  
“Objective stimuli.”  
(The shadows on her face were like  
Soft clouds upon the sky.)  
“And beauty,” said the poet, “is  
A far, elusive isle.”  
And, being with such clever folk,  
She was afraid to smile.

They talked of beauty all the way,  
And when we stopped for tea,  
Within a tavern garden  
At a table 'neath a tree,  
I held her hand beneath the cloth  
For just a little while,  
But, being with such clever folk,  
We were afraid to smile.

## *De Profundis*

WHEN Jonah watched the whale,  
Lashing its monstrous tail,  
Beating the billows white,  
Then dipping out of sight,  
Leaving him pondering  
On the shore wondering,  
Weary of life,  
Are you surprised that he,  
Left there so dismally,  
Feared from his depth of woe  
Just how his tale would go  
By with his wife?

## *The Sceptic*

WE met a thousand years ago  
(I think that's what she said).

It may be so; I only know  
Her mouth was very red.

We were two protoplasmic cells  
(Or something of the kind).

It may be so; I only know  
Her beauty made me blind.

We'd meet again a hundred times  
In ages yet to be. . . .

It may be so; I only know  
I'm meeting her at three.



## *Carving*

“NOTICE the intricate carving,  
The work of a lifetime of toil.  
Dignity, character, blending  
In beauty that nothing can spoil.”  
We listened. The old antique dealer  
Returned the tall chair to its place.  
He spoke of the pattern in rosewood;  
His customers thought of his face.

*Economist*

**B**EFORE the game he fills the long glass thrice  
And sees two games for one admission price.

## *Startling Effect of Spring*

O H, I went out a-walking in the middle of the town,  
When the streets were full of springtime, and the  
air was soft as down;

I swore I'd never weep again, wherever I should go;  
I winked upon a traffic cop, because I liked him so.  
I bought a bag of peanuts, and a new Fedora grey,  
I climbed upon the roof and threw the other one  
away.

And everywhere I went, what should I be thinking of,  
But a letter I was writing in my heart and to my love!

## *The Tramp with the Wistful Fingernails*

THE tramp with the wistful fingernails,  
Asleep in the languid lane,  
Dreaming among the garbage pails  
His opulent dreams of gain . . . .

The sun went down and its ancient fire  
Tinted the garbage old  
With the multiple shades of an eye's desire,  
Crimson and marigold.

It painted the pallid potato peels  
A delectable dragon's blood red,  
That is if the dragon had eaten green eels  
Before they had had him bled.

A Jackdaw peeked with a dubious beak  
At the sight of a sapphirine boot,  
That he very well knew, before it went blue,  
Was as grey as an elephant's snoot.

And he pecked with an air of distant disdain  
At an ominous onion skin,  
That had gone champagne and he feared in his brain  
Hypothetical pains within.

But the jackdaw took to his purplish wings  
As the sun in the west grew old,  
And dust crept over deserted things,  
And the breeze of the night was cold.

Till the mad, nefarious moon uprose  
And sailed in the star-hung sky,  
And the man in the moon looked over his nose  
And winked a polygamous eye . . . .

And the tramp with the wistful fingernails  
Awoke from his dreams of greed,  
And he bade farewell to the garbage pails  
And he hustled him forth to feed.

## *Pan in the City*

DEEP in the forest of buildings,  
Where the fire escapes cling like creepers  
Up the trunks of the sky-scrapers,  
Where the magazine stores blossom, red, gold and blue,  
I have seen Pan.  
Pan plays when the spring comes, and his nymphs  
    dance,  
Gay on the pavements.  
Oh! his nymphs, they are young, they are fresh,  
Though their faces are dirty.  
Pan plays, and his eyes flash,  
Turning the crank.



## *Autumn Night*

HALF of an hour ago  
That's where you stood,  
Knocking your pipe out  
And dinting the wood.  
Knocking your pipe out  
And spilling the ashes,  
Looking so serious,  
Laughing in splashes.  
Talking of poetry,  
Pottery, beer,  
Asking me riddles,  
And calling me dear,  
Giving me never  
A chance for a groan.  
At last I can breathe  
Now you've left me alone!  
Never I knew, I think,  
Lover so silly . . . .  
I'll just light the fire;  
It's surprisingly chilly.

*For the Records*

I'D liefer be nothing,  
I'd liefer be dead  
And a white shroud over  
My empty head.

Than walking about  
With an empty heart,  
With never a hurt  
To make it start,

To make me be wishing  
That I could be dead  
With a white shroud over  
My empty head.

## *Souvenir*

I SHALL forget your voice  
In a little while  
And the quick wakening  
Of your smile.

I shall forget your eyes  
In other lands  
And the swift touching  
Of our hands.

There shall be no remembrance  
Of the way  
The dream of you walked with me  
Through the day.

You shall be gone  
Forever, dear, and yet , , ,

The florist and the taxi company, the  
Jeweller and the ledger-keeper at the bank  
Won't let  
Me quite forget.

## *Old Man Sylvester*

OLD man Sylvester  
Lives in a garret  
With a black cat  
And an apple-green parrot.

His eyes they are green  
And his beard it is white,  
He is silent by day,  
But he chuckles at night.

For at night the gold moonbeams  
Make delicate strands  
That he plaits and he weaves  
With his skeleton hands.

And all the young men  
Beg in vain for a cloak  
Of the fabric of moonbeam:  
And that is his joke.

## *A Summer Serenade*

NOW the summertime, returning,  
Bids us leave the smoky city,  
Bid adieu the pavements burning.  
My canoe, so light and pretty,  
Restless waits with wanton yearning  
To transport us down the river  
Where the ferry boat is churning  
Up the mud, and all a-quiver  
Are the paper boxes floating  
From the haunts of gay picknickers.  
Come, my love, and let's be boating  
Where the golden sunlight flickers  
On the sewage! Let us find us  
Blown by gently scented zephyrs  
From the gas-works that remind us  
Of the abattoir's sad heifers!  
There we'll keep love's sweet appointment,  
Where the cats go drifting slow,  
Then we'll buy some insect ointment  
And we'll page the medico.

### *Explanation*

NOT that I find your beauty less, oh lover,  
That is not why my passion for you died,  
But have you never bought a lovely cover  
And found all bunk inside?



## Villanelle

I HAD a lot of things to say  
If I should meet her anywhere  
And so I said, "It's warm to-day."

I thought I'd tell her of the way  
The sunlight had upon her hair;  
I had a lot of things to say.

Her eyes, I thought, were bright and gay  
And yet there seemed a sadness there—  
And so I said, "It's warm to-day."

I only prayed that she might stay  
And listen while I spoke her fair;  
I had a lot of things to say.

I had composed a roundelay  
In which I sang her beauty rare—  
And so I said, "It's warm to-day."

The eloquence that in me lay  
I felt must lay my passion bare.  
I had a lot of things to say,  
And so I said, "It's warm to-day!"

*Item*

TELL me not in mournful numbers  
Life is but an empty dream;  
I have eaten raw cucumbers,  
And I find that Life's a scream.

## October

THE summer hotel is closed now  
And the pavilion where nightly the banjos twanged,  
And the couples passed shuffle-shuffle under the coloured  
lights  
Is boarded up.  
The natives used to come down on moonlight nights  
And poke fun at the dressed-up city folk,  
Crazy intruders . . . .  
The chilly wind off the lake whistles there now,  
And the farmer's daughter, whose derisive mocking  
Amused the yokels,  
Passes there on her way to the pasture,  
And she looks back at the empty pavilion  
A little wistfully.

## *Tea Dance*

HE held a brittle cup of tea  
And balanced it upon his knee;  
He thought that Morley Callaghan  
Must be a very clever man.

He nibbled at a sandwich thin  
And brushed a crumb from off his chin;  
He said that Edna S. Millay  
Reflected thoughts of Youth To-day.

He lit a Russian cigarette  
And puffed it gently. As he let  
The blue smoke rise he told me of  
What Baudelaire had said of love.

Upstairs his room, and round the wall  
Are hung his pictures, twelve in all,  
A fine collection which consists  
Of racing studs and pugilists.

## *Nursery Rhyme*

SING a song of Christmas,  
A pocketful of bills.  
Four-and-twenty merchants  
Tinkling on their tills.  
When the tills were opened  
They all began to cry,  
“We’ll be lucky fellows if  
We’re paid before July.”

## *Nunc Dimitis*

GENTLEMEN", thus the professor,  
"That will be all for to-day."  
Business of shuffling and scuffling,  
Putting of note-books away;  
Business of leaving the classroom,  
Business of reaching the air,  
Business of laughing and shouting,  
Finding the out-of-doors fair.

Years have gone by; the professor  
Doddering, doting and grey,  
Still tells irreverent classes,  
"That will be all for to-day";  
Folds his worn notes in his pocket,  
Wearily stumbles his way  
Over the dusk dreaming campus  
Counting his miserable pay.

Weary of minds that are vacant,  
Wishing for peace and for rest,  
Dreaming of shackles discarded,  
Wishing the wish that is best,  
That some day an angel will tap him  
Soft on the shoulder and say,  
"Mr. Scholasticus Thompson,  
That will be all for to-day!"

## *In Praise of Poverty*

I WOULD rather have a cottage  
And brown bread and cheese  
Than live in a palace  
And give pink teas.

I would rather have a log fire  
And sit by my lone  
Than a modern heating system  
And sit upon a throne,

And a long glass of ale  
Is better than champagne  
Or wines from out of Normandy  
Or far away Spain.

I would rather have a stein of beer  
And drink it by myself  
Than rare old Bacardi,  
And more upon the shelf.

For the man that has a castle  
Has taxes in his bed,  
Has figures in his porridge  
And a lawsuit when he's dead.

But the man that has a cottage  
And dines off bread and cheese  
He hasn't an assessment  
And he dies at his ease.

## Wings

N<sup>E</sup>VER on earth  
Shall he know any rest  
Who has borne in the night  
A wild bird in his breast.

Ever he'll walk  
With the shadowy things  
While his ears hear no talk  
For the flutter of wings.

Life shall go over  
Like swans in the night  
With a whisper of wonder  
And something of fright.

Though he walk in still beauty  
He nothing shall see  
Till two coins on his eyes  
Set the beating wings free.



## *Tea Room Deportment*

**A**T the tea room tables  
They sit by twos and twos,  
Harrys, Bills and Mabels,  
And talk of I's and You's.

And seeing them softly chatting,  
With this fact I'm plainly faced,  
Here personal remarks are  
Always in good taste.

## *A Valentine*

**S**T. VALENTINE'S day is a day when the birds  
Are reputed to start their philand'ring,  
And lovers all over, in twos and in herds,  
In dalliance sweet go meand'ring.  
The wise little birds set the fourteenth apart  
To inaugurate billing and cooing,  
To the flutter of feather and flitter of heart—  
Which is just what we ought to be doing.

With this thought in my mind, I'll be calling at eight,  
And I look for a hearty reception,  
And if I don't get it, be warned of your fate  
(Don't say that I practise deception!)  
For it's also the day that Saint Valentine's neck  
Was chopped in a manner most sordid;  
Which will give you an inkling of what is on deck  
If my suit you should pass unrewarded!

## *The Ballad of the Deadly Debutantes*

“OH, where ha’ ye been, my son, my son,  
And why look sae cast down?”  
“Oh, I ha’ been out with a debutante, mither,  
The gayest in a’ the town.”

“Robert, dear Robert, come tell to me true  
Why you sae doleful be.”  
“Oh, I ha’ been doing what the debutantes do  
From dusk till ha’ past three.

“Fair Margaret came out last Monday nicht;  
On Tuesday ’twas Jennie’s debut;  
On We’n’sday saw I a wondrous sicht  
For bonnie wee Kate M’Grew.

“On Thursday nicht ’twas Maude McCrae  
And Friday ’twas Mary M’Clean;  
I went to a tea dance on Saturday,  
That nicht ’twas sweet Jeannette M’Kane!

“Oh, Mither, dear mither, go make ma bed,  
An’ make it well and soft,  
For I’ll nae more star on the football field  
As I ha’ done sae oft.

“Oh, get me six stags in dancing shoon  
An’ swallow-tail coats sae gay,  
Six weary fellows to carry me soon  
To where I lang shall lay.

“A jazz band shall moan me, sad and drear,  
Lay a programme on my breast,  
But if ever a deb, come near my bier  
My soul shall find nae rest.”

## The Smuggler's Sweetheart

(“The only romantic side of Canadian and American life is the rum-running business.”—*Gilson Taylor in the English Press.*)

JENNIE, love, Jennie, dove,  
Where's your true-love gone?  
Tell me why you're waking,  
Daylight until dawn.  
Tell me, is he mounted  
On his charger gay?  
Has he gone a-riding  
To the wars away?"

But pretty Jennie sighed  
And sadly hung her head,  
And she answered not a word;  
She turned away instead.  
And with her dainty toe  
Made a pattern in the sand;  
So I stepped to her close  
And I took her by the hand.

“Jennie, love, Jennie, dove,  
Has he gone to sea,  
Shipped aboard a merchantman  
To sail the Caribbee ?  
Perhaps he is a pirate bold  
And sails the Spanish Main  
And scuttles golden galleons  
From Penang to Port o’ Spain?”

But “Fi!” cries pretty Jennie,  
“My true-love’s far away,  
For he’s running sixty cases  
In a six-ton dray.  
But he’ll soon be back again  
With a fortune, more or less,  
And he promised that he’d bring me  
A New York dress.”

## Definitions Without Prejudice

### THE COLLEGE MAN

THE College Man  
Knows all the dates  
And favourite colours  
Of the greats;  
He knows the world  
From Ab to Zur  
And goes to work  
At fifteen per.

### THE REFORMER

The sad Reform-  
Er grimly frowns  
On maids who wear  
The latest gowns;  
He scowls at youths  
Who drink and dance  
And wishes he  
Could have the chance.

### THE CLUBMAN

The Clubman is  
The one whose feet  
Are found in win-  
Dows on the street,  
A bored and blasé  
Air assumes,  
And shoots himself  
In hotel rooms.

### THE DEBUTANTE

A Debutante's  
A pretty thing;  
She dances till  
The birdies sing;  
She holds hands dur-  
Ing intermissions  
And hasn't any  
Inhibitions.

### THE MOVIE QUEEN

The Movie Queen's  
A lovely lass,  
Combining vir-  
Tue, brains and class.  
Her favourite books,  
Uplifting ones,  
Like "Love's Reward",  
Who's Who and Dun's.

### THE TRAFFIC COP

The Traffic Cop's  
A jolly chap,  
He's all good will  
From toe to cap.  
With gentle thoughts  
His mind's a-gleam;  
He eats hot must-  
Ard for ice cream.



### THE LAWYER

The Lawyer makes  
A lot of dough  
From Whosit ver-  
Sus So-and-so;  
He loves a fight  
And rants and curses  
For life for him  
Is always versus.

### THE TAXI DRIVER

The Taxi drives  
Where you desire,  
His flag is up  
When he's for hire;  
A perfect world  
Would make this codger  
Fly instead  
The Jolly Rodger.

### THE BIG EXECUTIVE

The Big Exec-  
Utives are men  
Who go to work  
At half-past ten;  
They live on charts  
And wear plus-fours;  
They cut down costs  
And golfing scores.

### *City Sparrows—November*

O H, small divinity, whose might  
Is o'er the forest birds, that hears their prayers,  
Twittered half sleeping in the night,  
And grants the little need that's theirs,  
Have pity on these infidels that flutter  
Far from thy high cathedral way  
And miserably in eavestrough and in gutter  
Eke out their little atheistic day;  
Yield them from mercy's store a sheltered ledge  
Safe from the fury of the winter's blow,  
Some warm soft nesting at a chimney's edge,  
And grant a daily bread crust on the snow!

## *It's All in the Press*

M<sup>RS.</sup> McGONIGLE  
Held a large tea;  
A murder took place  
At One Hundred and Three;  
A cabinet minister  
Made a long speech;  
Two thousand people  
Went down to the beach;  
Kipling says this;  
Mussolini says that;  
And three orphaned rabbits  
Are nursed by a cat.  
A duke fights a duel;  
A man bites a dog;  
A rum-running schooner  
Goes down in a fog;  
STAGE MONSTER MASS MEETING;  
DRUG SOLONS CONVENE;  
A New Yorker patents  
A hot-dog machine.  
The Bishop of Burgundy  
Flays modern dress;  
You know it, I know it,  
It's all in the Press.

## *Santa Claus*

**I**N innocence I thought I was the one  
Who filled the stockings by the embers' glow,  
Because, when all the Christmas tales were done  
And moonlight lay upon the silent snow,  
When little fingers on the coverlet  
Were still, the stockings I had taken,  
With toys and candies each had filled and met  
No person there, heard none awaken.  
"My gifts," I fancied as to bed I crept.  
Oh, thinking so I made a foolish blunder,  
For in the morn, 'twas found that while I slept  
Someone had filled each tiny sock with wonder!

## Thoughts in a Civic Summer

JUST now the wall flowers are in bloom  
In every hotel dancing room,  
And on the starlit beach I think  
The stags come down to snake a drink . . .

Here am I, sweating, sick and hot  
In Toronto—*Du lieber Gott!*  
Work a-plenty ties me down  
To summer in a sizzling town.  
. . . Ah, God, to see the branches sway  
Across the moon at Go Home Bay!  
To smell the balsam and the pine,  
To feel the bass tug at the line . . .

Say, do the naked rocks still stand  
Still guardians of the happy land?  
Do butterflies still flit about?  
And angry bees and wasps come out?  
Oh, are the wharves all rotting thin  
Where one can slip and bark a shin?  
Cities are stuffy—sweet the days  
At Lake of Bays, at Lake of Bays! . . .

Say, is there Beauty yet to find  
And summer maids, the noisy kind,  
To help a lonesome man forget  
His name, his home, his wife . . . Oh, yet  
Do steamboats take all day to reach  
Your own small island, cottage, beach?  
—And do the boarding houses gay,  
Still serve out pie three times a day?

## *He Decides to Say Nothing*

ONCE I had thought,  
If you should die  
I'd rear a temple  
To the sky,  
White alabaster  
Against the blue,  
So might young lovers  
Know of you,  
And dream and feel  
The aching start  
Like a swift dagger  
In the heart.  
But now I know  
When you are dead  
I'll carry my sorrow  
In my head,  
Smile and gabble  
And buy and sell,  
Greet my guests  
And wish them well  
Or seal my lips  
And go my way  
And let young lovers  
Have their day.

### *Triolet*

**M**AIDEN, do not be so shy,  
Let that flutt'ring heart subdue.  
You may raise that bashful eye.  
Maiden, do not be so shy;  
Have no fear, my dear, for I  
Like them under thirty-two.  
Maiden, do not be so shy,  
Let that flutt'ring heart subdue.

*Disillusioned Thoughts for a  
New Year*

WHEN I was young  
(Say under twenty)  
I thought my store  
Of years a-plenty.

The noisy pageant,  
Time, rolls by:  
One weeps to learn  
The empty lie

That, writ in gaudy  
Colours, caught  
The eager eyes  
Of us untaught.

(Beauty a legend,  
A fable Peace.  
One envied the graybeards'  
Earned release.)

And yet one stands,  
At twenty-seven,  
A bit too precious  
Close to heaven.



## *Rainy Sunday*

**I**T rains to-day,  
And so it rained upon that other Sunday  
Now but four weeks past.

You will remember:  
I went out to get some cigarettes  
At the little store on the corner.

Strange incident to hang a heart's ache on  
And yet—  
These foreign streets shine now with such a glint  
And the snow melts in the gutters  
Here as then.  
(Almost I hear the elevated pass!)

It rains to-day.

## *Autumn Song*

O COME with me and be my love,  
We'll seek the grassy meadow,  
With little clouds of white above  
And leaves a-turning red-o!

We'll sit beside the vocal stream,  
Our hearts a-thumping faster,  
Then wander homeward in a dream  
And try a mustard plaster!

*Comment on the Influence of  
Current Literature upon  
the Adolescent Mind*

**T**HE naughty books of Madame Glyn  
I have not read. And yet I sin.

### *Love in the Cooler*

**L**OVE went whistling where the wind blows  
Over meadows sweet:  
Love went peeping in at windows  
Down the crooked street.

Till the squad on public morals  
Knew not what to think,  
So they added to their laurels,  
Put him in the clink.

## *The Lyric Lover*

A MARYLLIS, when we loved, aforetime,  
I said my heart was like a flag in wartime.  
I wooed you, maid, with many a burning sapphic,  
My similes were nothing if not graphic.

Now that we've parted—ah, the sad occasion!  
Permit me, pray, one lyric observation:  
My heart is dismal as the gas works' smell or  
A gaunt, cool furnace in a summer cellar.

*Villanelle of a Girl Whose Name  
I Can't Recall*

**I**N an old trunk I made a puzzling haul,  
A photograph, 'midst skates and books, I found,  
A girl whose name I simply can't recall!

Maid of some distant Summer, Spring or Fall!  
Or was it Winter that you held me bound?  
In an old trunk I made a puzzling haul.

She stands beneath the lilacs, graceful, tall,  
Blushing, I think, and exquisitely gowned—  
A girl whose name I simply can't recall.

She smiles as if she knew she could enthrall  
With voice and eyes and hands the sun has browned.  
In an old trunk I made a puzzling haul.

Maiden, I think that I would give my all  
If you'd return the heart you hold in pound.  
A girl whose name I simply can't recall.

The signature is neat and very small:  
"From Oozey-goozey to the Whiskey Hound."  
In an old trunk I made a puzzling haul,  
A girl whose name I simply can't recall!

## *Barter*

**S**NOW flies in the busy street.  
An old woman  
Sells little packets of lavender  
To the Christmas shoppers.  
“Sweet lavender, sweet-smelling lavender!  
Five cents a package!”  
If she sells enough packages  
She will be able to go and buy herself some garlic.

*Verses Composed After Reading News  
from the Ontario Legislature*

I THOUGHT I saw a deficit  
Of many million bones;  
The recent government, 'twas clear,  
Had squandered gifts and loans.

I read another paper then;  
I purchased eight or ten,  
And found instead there had been saved  
A million iron men.

'Twas evident the government  
At present in the lead  
Was quite the kitten's funny-bone,  
In fact, just what we need.

And yet the youngest child could see  
That they were maniacs;  
And that the angry populace  
Should wield a hefty axe.

"If forty clerks with forty pens  
Should figure forty year,  
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,  
"That they could get it clear?"  
"I doubt it," said the Taxpayer,  
And shed a bitter tear.



## *Ballade of the Italian Organ-Grinder*

OF memories that fragrant are,  
Lost days the heart can ne'er forget,  
The last sad drink across the bar,  
A face, a fan, a dream,—ah, yet,  
Before oblivion claims him, let  
Us seek some lingering, sad reminder  
Of one whose star begins to set—  
The old Italian organ-grinder.

“Sweet Maggie Murph’ ”, “The Low-backed Car”,  
And “Nellie Gray”! We are in debt  
For melodies more lovely far  
Than beds of phlox and mignonette.  
They sprung refreshing as a jet  
From some lost fount. Oh, dark spell-binder,  
Where is your mangy Simian pet  
And you, Italian organ-grinder?

Sometimes you smoked a cheap cigar,  
For coins were easy then to get;  
The children danced—your stock was par,  
And Jocko wore a blue jacquette!  
Your glass of wine—for we were wet—  
Was relished then—ah, folks were kinder!  
Time marches on—and we regret  
The old Italian organ-grinder.

Prince, we would like to make a bet  
That, with his hand upon the winder,  
In streets celestial will be met  
The old Italian organ-grinder!

## *April*

O H, April is a little maid  
With slender limbs and white,  
And April walks in innocence  
In Spring's first blossoms dight.

But if she be a little maid,  
As all the poets say,  
What gives her power to strangle hearts  
In such an ancient way?

## *The Wise Guys*

THE gods walk slowly over the distant clouds;  
They found out about man and they lost their  
faith;  
They're wise guys now.  
They wouldn't turn an immortal hair for a templeful  
of babbitts;  
They're not to be taken in any more.  
They have walked a long way and have given up  
miracles.  
They're very superior and intellectual in their new  
freedom, the gods are,  
Except a couple of backsliders  
About kids—  
Maybe kids are all right.

## *Song*

**A**S I went out a-walking  
One bright November day  
I laughed to see the leaves come down  
In such a silly way.

I laughed to see the leaves come down  
To lie upon the grass;  
I twirled the seasons 'round my thumb  
And laughed to see them pass.

O love, let not your sad eyes mourn  
The year upon the wing,  
For all that's mine I offer you  
(And I have captured spring).

## *Penny Arcadia*

THEY met in the penny arcade  
One presentient day in June,  
And she, a bashful, blushing maid,  
Was hearing a ragtime tune.

And he, as you may have surmised,  
Was an arrogant, shameless churl,  
And the name of the slides he patronized  
Was, "How to Kiss a Girl!"

It was through; and he raised his chin  
And he turned as if to go  
When he saw with a grin she was listening in  
On, "Lonesome for a Beau!"

. . . . .

Oh, the years with their ghostly tread  
Have marched from the chanceful day,  
And the hair has gone from the top of his head  
And hers is streaked with gray.

And he is a millionaire  
With a car and a castle and coal,  
And their children's children 'round his chair,  
And she is a dear old soul.

And he bought the penny arcade  
And he carted it off to his home,  
And he had a palatial pavilion made  
With a luminous, golden dome.

There he sits with his lady sweet  
When the evening shadows fall,  
With a bucket of pennies beside his feet  
And the slot machines 'round the wall.

And at night, when beggar and earl  
Listen in on the radio,  
They put on, "How to Kiss a Girl!"  
And "Lonesome for a Beau!"

## When Babylon was Young

("A paving block from the city of Babylon, thought to be more than three thousand years old, has been presented to the museum . . ."—*News Item*.)

IN Babylon, in Babylon,  
Three thousand years ago,  
The willows drooped their veils to meet  
The river, running slow.  
Grey mists of rarest gossamer  
To hidden music stirred,  
And over palace lawns the song  
Of nightingales was heard.  
The gallants walked in gardens then  
And poets sang of quest;  
Young lordlings courted princesses  
With epigram and jest.  
A hundred dancing maidens swayed,  
Wine spilled and songs were sung;  
The world was very beautiful  
When Babylon was young.

In Babylon, in Babylon,  
The city fathers sat  
And wrangled in the council room  
Concerning This and That.  
And this one was a grafter  
And this one was a thief,  
And how a third obtained his wealth  
Was well beyond belief.  
But one who was a realtor,  
For whom six hundred slaved,  
Had bribed the council chamber  
To have his suburb paved.  
Oh, devious ways were not unknown  
And sinners went unhung  
As now, three thousand years ago  
When Babylon was young.

In Babylon, in Babylon,  
Three thousand years ago,  
Ambassadors before the throne  
Stood in a shining row.  
And eyebrow pencil on white brows  
Traced slender threads of green—  
And now a dagger in the dark  
Slays one who loved the queen.  
And swords rang sharp on silent nights  
To settle ancient scores,  
And eyes looked down from turrets  
As men rode forth to wars.  
*Bel-shazzar in a purple robe*  
*Commands the harps be strung! . . .*  
This paving block they say was laid  
When Babylon was young.



## *Everybody Knows About Spring*

THE snow is beginning to melt;  
It lies soft in the wet street  
Like brown sugar.  
There is a musical drip, drip, from the roofs,  
Roofs once white with snow and moonlight,  
The air is fresh, clean, exciting!  
It is, of course, spring.

Everybody knows about spring.  
Oh, yes.  
In the spring lambs come out and frisk,  
In the spring poets go out into the fields and get their  
feet wet.  
Everybody knows about spring.  
Spring is, in fact, a very commonplace affair.  
To avoid being boring don't mention it.  
Somebody may take you for a poet  
Or something.

And yet,  
I, who have never seen young lambs outside of a butcher  
shop  
Nor even a mad poet in a marshy meadow,  
Want to raise the roof,  
Want to play hide and seek with the fat traffic cop  
at the intersection,  
Want to go over to the island and look goofy at the  
swans.  
Spring is about 99 per cent. over proof spirits.  
It ought to be prohibited.

## *The Toys That Haven't Been Bought*

O H, Christmas Eve is the happiest night  
The year can hold in store,  
But Christmas Eve brings a pitiful sight  
On the Toy Department floor.  
Oh, whisper and giggle, laugh and joke,  
But spare one dutiful thought  
For the sad little, mad little, helpless folk,  
The toys that haven't been bought.

Oh, happy the doll who Christmas Eve  
May sleep in a Christmas box,  
And merrier far than you'd ever believe  
Are the toys in the well-filled socks.  
But what of the poor little Teddy Bears  
Back in the store, distraught,  
The pigs and the cows and the pinky bow-wows,  
The toys that haven't been bought?

Oh, Christmas Eve the women who rub  
And polish the silent store,  
Forget their pails when they come to scrub  
The Toy Department floor.  
For there's never a need of water, my dears,  
Whatever you might have thought,  
For everything's soppy and droppy with tears  
Of the toys that haven't been bought!

## An Old House

UP those steps  
On New Year's Day  
All the young bloods  
Came to pay  
Their New Year's call,  
In a gallant line,  
In eighteen hundred  
And eighty-nine.

And eyes peeked out  
That pane to see  
Who should be coming  
In to tea.  
And giggles and titters  
Behind the sash  
Greeted the swain  
Of the grand moustache.

Oh, time has flown  
Since the gay lost years,  
But old Miss Parkins  
Claims she hears  
The New Year's line  
On the front steps yet . . .  
*And something jiggled*  
*The "Rooms to Let".*

## *Seasonal Cheer*

**I**T'S Christmas in China, it's Christmas in Spain,  
It's Christmas for Turkoman, Dervish and Dane,  
It's Christmas in Greenland, in clean and obscene land,  
It's Christmas all over from Dover to Maine.

It's Christmas in Cuba and also Bermuda,  
At Lido, Toledo, St. Paul and St. James.  
It's Christmas in Paraguay, Uruguay, fire away;  
We've got an atlas that's chock full of names.

This concept is cheering when Christmas bills, leering,  
Dismay the gift shopper, and fill him with woe.  
For out of the masses of all sorts and classes  
You only buy presents for those whom you know.

## *Tide*

**S**LOWLY their steps go down the dark,  
The loveliest and best,  
And some day you must turn and go  
To walk there with the rest.

And this one was a wastrel son,  
And this one talked with God,  
And this saved pennies all his life  
To buy his length in sod.

Greyly, greyly move they like  
The tide upon a day  
When mists about the shipping lie  
And all the world is grey.

Then I'll be rhyming rhymes about  
Your immortality  
And telling people how you smiled—  
And Time shall come for me.

## Ur of the Chaldees

(Archaeological finds of some importance have been made on what is believed to be the site of the ancient city of Ur."—*News Item*.)

THE thin, clear piping of the shepherd's reed  
Drifts lightly o'er the summer-drowsy hills,  
And hovers like a silver mist that fills  
The deep, black valleys, rolls across the meads,  
All golden haze. The dark Chaldean lad,  
Watching beside his flock the lazy noon,  
Trills out a strange, forgotten minor tune;  
Then falls to dreaming, hears the gentle pad  
Of wanton goat-feet tripping to the stream.  
Then like a muffled, distant-beaten drum  
Soft vagrant breezes bring a gentle hum:  
The chariot wheels of Ur! His idle dream

Is sudden shot with yearning for the sight  
Of peacocks strutting formal palace lawns,  
Where gentle ladies feed the timid fawns,  
In mighty Ur. Ur, where the starry night  
Is white with laughter and the crimson wine  
Flows bubbling like a never-ending spring!  
For Ur, the sky-crowned city, poets sing!  
Ur, where the bearded nobles, jesting, dine,  
And love and silk are bartered in the mart!  
Ur of the Chaldees, ancient fabled town!  
The princess wears a trailing purple gown,  
And dark eyes stab a lonely shepherd's heart!

Ur that shall live for ever! . . . Softly dies  
The breeze; the fluttering leaves are folded, still;  
Only the murmuring bees' low murmurings fill  
The air that sang just now with distant cries. . . .

The archaeologist put down his spade,  
Picked up a fragment of a shattered urn,  
And, with an air of very grave concern,  
Drank from a flask some tepid lemonade.  
And while he sat and wrote a learned screed  
That catalogued his find, across the hills,  
Borne on a listless breeze in failing trills,  
Came thin, clear piping from a shepherd's reed.

## *Freshman's Lament*

"SON," my mother told me,  
"When you go to college  
Pay attention to your books  
And gather useful knowledge."

"Son," said my father,  
"When you go to school  
Get a place upon a team  
And battle like a fool."

"Lad," remarked my brother,  
Patronizingly,  
"Here's a little corkscrew.  
It was good enough for me."

"Kid," said my sister,  
"Look up Mary Tripe.  
She's pretty and she dances and  
She's just your type."

Now that I'm a college man,  
A Greek Letter feller,  
I ponder what my family said,  
Cleaning up a cellar.



## *Henry Chew*

**H**E smokes a pipe, old Henry Chew,  
He hasn't so much else to do.  
He smokes a pipe and aims and spits  
And sometimes misses, sometimes hits,  
It doesn't matter much for, well,  
You see he owns the blamed hotel.  
He owns the lands from Grover Square  
Right through the town and up to where  
The township starts, and that's not all,  
He owns the gosh-darned city hall.  
He owns it all, he told me so,  
And, well I guess he ought to know.

He smokes a pipe, does Henry Chew,  
And plans the things he's going to do.  
Next year he says he's going to sell  
The armouries and build a swell  
Saloon for all the boys to go  
And treat themselves on Henry's dough.  
He's seen a lot of life, has he,  
Just ask him of the victory  
They scored 'way back at Ladysmith,  
And if you think that that's a myth  
Ask what he did at Waterloo.  
He'll tell you that, will Henry Chew.

The boys down from the mining camps  
Pass arm in arm with local vamps;  
Life passes by but Henry Chew  
Sits as he always used to do.  
Jazz, radio and movie stars  
He can't abide, while motor cars  
He can't do justice to. Some day,  
He says the time's not far away,  
He's going to up and ride behind  
A spanking team of *horses*, mind!  
I guess that last will soon come true;  
He's getting old, is Henry Chew.

## *Sophisticate*

THE cottage at the lake  
Is closed up sound.  
Ochre and scarlet  
Drop the leaves around.  
A squirrel with his red tail  
Up his back  
Runs up the empty path  
And scampers back.  
He finds in his new freedom  
Little ease;  
Last summer he grew fond  
Of groceries.

*Verses Written in the Belief that  
it is Useless to Resist  
Natural Magic*

O H, millionaires forget to mill  
And students hate their books,  
The lambs go skipping o'er the hill  
By syncopating brooks.

And I shall buss a thousand maids  
And break each pedant's rule,  
For April's in the towns and glades  
And I'm an April Fool!

## Statement

I WILL say this:

That when I grow too old  
For gallantry, and when I'm told  
That bending o'er a slender hand for me  
Is but the apex of absurdity,  
And when my ancient limbs no longer quicken  
To strains of amorous music, I'll not sicken.  
I shall not hie me to the chimney nook  
With an old book.

I will say this.

I will say this:

That when I reach those years  
When I should have no thought of lovers' tears,  
When I should have no thought of lovers' sighs  
Or lovers' laughter or of downcast eyes,  
Of walking up and down a certain street  
Till dawn creeps in the window of my sweet,  
You will not find me sitting at the fire  
With no desire.

I will say this.

I will say this:

Hands touching, eyes that cling to eyes, a kiss,  
Such stuff as these I vow I shall not miss,  
Nor rain-wet hair upon a forehead white,  
Nor distant music on a summer night,  
For these are mine and I have gathered these,  
And when my heart's too old to ride the breeze  
Hours shall not mock me as they pass me by,  
Where I shall lie.

I will say this.

## Won't You Play Something, Miss Brown?

(My friends jeered when I walked to the piano.—*Adv.*)

SHE played. The room was filled with chords  
Of melodies unheard before.  
She played a ballad and a waltz,  
And then she smiled and played some more.

She played. Her slender fingers wove  
Of phantom notes a strange design.  
She played, though none had asked her to;  
'Twas just a quarter after nine.

She played. We laid our hands aside,  
Our bridge forgotten with the score.  
She played a song she said she loved;  
She played it five or six times more.

She played "I Hear You Calling Me",  
She sighed and played it once again;  
"The Maiden's Prayer" and "Sonny Boy".  
It was a quarter after ten.

She played till everyone was gone;  
It was a quarter after two.  
'Tis terrible to think what harm  
Six lessons through the mail can do!

## Song

I SHALL not sing now any more,  
I shall go silent on my way;  
And if a stranger smile at me  
I'll wish him, "Well-a-day!"

*Drop a ticket in the slot,  
Go to church a-Sunday,  
Never buy forget-me-not,  
Go to work a-Monday!*

I shall leave my lute to lie  
Dusty on the attic floor;  
Some may greet the spring, but I—  
I shall sing no more.

I shall weave strange harmonies  
Of little deeds from dawn to night;  
Homely tasks shall know my touch  
With a sweet delight.

I shall make a deathless song  
Out of things a man may do,  
It shall be—though Time be long—  
Beautiful for you.

*Order buttered toast and tea,  
Go to church a-Sunday,  
Never pluck the rosemary,  
Go to work a-Monday!*

## *Testament*

PHIL can have my fiddle,  
John can have my cat,  
Dan can have my overshoes  
And high silk hat.

Bill can have my neckties,  
He wore them, anyway.  
And Tom can keep the book he took  
To keep for just a day.

But nobody can ever have  
Three white hours,  
Unless they come where I shall lie  
And pluck them in the flowers.



## *A Fable*

**I**N a very old house  
Lived Jenny, a mouse,  
And she ran up and down in the wall.  
But this snooty young thing  
Aspired for to sing  
Though her voice was a shrill one and small.

Now Thomas, a cat,  
Was active, though fat,  
And he harked to the singing of Jenny.  
He was wicked and sly  
And a crafty old guy  
Than whom there were meaner not any.

Jenny Mouse would remark  
That not long after dark  
Old Thomas was sure to appear  
And list by the hour  
To her notes, sweet and sour,  
With, it seemed, an appreciative ear.

Now she liked to believe  
That this cat, by your leave,  
Was moved by her tonal expression,  
And it tickled the pride  
Of the rodent inside  
To think she had made an impression.

She observed, "You'll admit  
If I make such a hit  
Through a coating of woodwork and plaster,  
The presumption is clear,  
If I sang in his ear  
My progress with him would be faster."

So speaking she stept  
From the wall; the cat leapt,  
Grabbed and gobbled her up with a grin.  
Now the moral is plain—  
If you choose to be vain  
You're more often than not "taken in"!

## *The Doe With The Dazzling Dance*

**I**N the frozen north, when the moon lies hid,  
The stars' dim rays enhance  
The strange delight of a rabbit white  
Who does a delectable dance.

She trips, soft shoe, as rabbits do,  
With never a tell-tale sound  
And her style is gay though a bit risqué  
And the bucks all gather 'round.

Now there isn't a burrow in all the north  
Where it's safe for a rabbit man  
To mention her, but I rather infer  
That they dream of her wild can-can.

For once a buck with the darndest luck,  
Ill-starred by the Goddess Chance,  
Left his wife in the lurch and went in search  
Of the doe with the dazzling dance.

Oh, his heart beat fast as he hustled past  
And his powder-puff tail went twitch  
As he came to the break at the edge of the lake,  
And the night was dark as pitch.

Then the moonlight, cupped in an amber cloud,  
Brimmed, spilled and began to flow  
With a mystical, musical, tinkling sound  
Over the ivory snow.

And a cottontail rabbit neglecting his wife  
On a doubtful nocturnal parade  
Was caught in the open and ran for his life  
To the ominous forest shade.

But the woods are full of eyes that gleam  
And the brains behind that think  
(Though there's never a sound but the trickling stream  
Where the eyes slink down to drink).

The forest stirred and a shriek was heard  
And red drops stained the snow  
And terrible fears assailed the ears  
Of the daring, delectable doe.

But time heals grief and it's my belief  
That the bucks still take a chance  
And scamper away to the graceful, gay,  
White doe with the dazzling dance.

### *Reply to a Letter*

CALL me little, call me false  
That I should love again,  
Toss me back the pretty vows  
That I made you then.

Turn away and count our love  
Less than its begetting,  
Think a heart that sings once more  
Scarcely worth forgetting,

You who taught me first of all  
To wish that I were dead,  
To tread an empty street at night  
And weep across a bed.

## *Advice*

TAKE an abstract view of it,  
You'll get over it, yes you will,  
There's nothing to gain by writhing in pain  
And looking for someone to kill.

Time is the greatest healer of all,  
Hearts don't break, how much they bend,  
You'll laugh at the things that once held stings,  
It'll come out all right in the end.

Fix your attention on something else,  
Soon you'll observe that your griefs fall flat,  
And life will drift softly and gently along. . . .  
And who the hell wants that?

## *Discovery*

WITHIN a room there was a shelf  
And on the shelf there lay a book,  
And in the book I chanced to look  
And there I hap'd to find myself.

I thought it passing strange that I,  
Whose feet were never loth to dance,  
Should happen by a trick of chance  
To find me dusty, cold and dry.

But though I now be fresh and fair,  
Ere years have had their way with me,  
I know that some day I shall be  
More lively here than anywhere.

## *Five Poems on More or Less Related Topics*

*With a Decidedly Feminine Slant*

### SECOND BEST

THE hat I bought to greet you in,  
When you should come to town,  
Was smart and in the latest mode;  
It had a sporty crown.

I wore it all that waiting week,  
And when you wrote to say  
You couldn't come, I wore it still;  
I wore it yesterday.

For when I'm taken out by him  
I left at your behest,  
I wear the hat I bought for you;  
It is my second best.

\* \* \*

### WARNING TO MAIDENS

Elaine, she pined for Launcelot  
Unto her dying day;  
So whenever I met a Launcelot  
I looked the other way.



Now Dido for Aeneas died  
And cried that death was sweet;  
So whenever I met a warrior bold  
I stepped across the street.

But I have met a gentle lad,  
With never a swagger at all,  
And only a trick of looking so,  
And neither broad nor tall.

And would that I'd find a hefty brute  
With a voice to make you start,  
To rescue me from a shy lad's way,  
Before I break my heart!

\* \* \*

#### INGRATITUDE

Hal was working very hard  
To be wealthy when we wed;  
He really couldn't kiss me much  
With business in his head,  
But some day I should dress in silks;  
At least that's what he said.

I wore my cotton stockings  
The day I walked with Sid.  
He kissed me in my gingham frock  
And dollar-eighty lid;  
I shouldn't have run off with him,  
But that's just what I did.

## ADVICE

Paul had a wonderful  
Way with the women;  
Roger was a nice lad,  
But very, very shy.  
I took Roger, for  
My grandmother told me,  
"Never trust a man with  
A roving eye!"

Roger up and left me for  
A gal who started moth'ring him,  
Paul went to Asia when  
I passed him by.  
Granny took to drinking  
With a trav'ling salesman,  
Ran away to Borneo;  
And here am I.

\* \* \*

## CHANCE MEETING

I was looking for crocuses  
Out on the lawn  
And I didn't expect  
To run into a faun.

He was looking for asphodel  
Over the lea  
And never expected  
To run into me.

## *Routine*

I awoke in the night  
At a quarter to four  
And I prayed that my heart  
Wouldn't beat any more.

That never the sun  
Would come into the room  
Till I'd stiffened to enter  
The still of the tomb,

With night for my leman  
And silence for gown,  
And never the sound  
Of your voice rippling down.

I leapt from my bed  
At a quarter past eight,  
And I got to the office  
Just ten minutes late.

*A Nod's as Good as a Wink to a Blind Horse*

WE laughed and kissed and yet I know  
That if we meet tomorrow  
Your face will sweetly, gently show  
A frail pretence of sorrow.

You'll place your hand on mine and say,  
With sighs, that you'd be taking  
The road that leads from me away  
And, oh, you'll fear you're breaking

This tender heart, you'll bid me be  
Always your friend, perhaps remind me  
Of passion's sad futility. . . .  
If you can find me.

## *Six Portraits Conceived in Malice*

KENNETH

HE always bids no trumps and takes  
Eight rubbers out of nine  
By looking most sagacious as  
He says, "The rest are mine."

\* \* \*

JANICE

She thinks that modern clothes are not  
For girls with figure rated low;  
She wears them, just to prove, no doubt,  
That what she says is so.

\* \* \*

OSCAR

He should be losing weight, he knows,  
Yet no success the scales reveal,  
Though he eats weight-reducing foods  
Along with every meal.

CLARICE

She's tailored smartly, chic and thin,  
Just like a waxen mannequin,  
And yet it seems from where I sit,  
The mannequin has more of "It".

\* \* \*

EGERTON

When alcohol was under ban  
He was a very drunken man;  
But now it's legal beer to buy,  
He's on the wagon, very dry.

\* \* \*

BARBARA

"I study art two hours a week,"  
She said and fondly sighed.  
"A girl must have something, you know,  
To keep her occupied."

## *Don't Shout; I Hear You Perfectly*

**I**T'S sweet of you to tell me  
That I am all in all,  
That I'm the apple  
Of your eye,  
That I'm the rainbow  
In your sky,  
The à la mode  
Upon your pie,  
That I'm the works,  
That I'm the guy  
For whom you'd pass  
The others by,  
That I'm your Who,  
Your Whence, Your Why,  
For whom you'd laugh,  
For whom you'd cry,  
For whom you'd swear,  
For whom you'd lie,  
For whom you'd live,  
For whom you'd die.  
It's sweet of you to tell me  
That I am all in all,  
BUT WHOSE ARE THOSE LARGE OVERSHOES  
I PASSED OUT IN THE HALL?

*Oh Well, What's the Use?*

**S**TUBBORN, perverse and hard to please,  
By turns too proud and sycophantic,  
I made a catalogue with ease  
Listing your every wicked antic.

Conceited, prudish, callow, mad,  
Too easily caught by worthless ladies,  
You told me every fault I had  
And soft consigned my soul to Hades.

We both agreed that both were right,  
We liked us not; we did not rate,  
And yet we linger here this night—  
At least we have a common hate.



Warning to Young Men Who Will Find  
Out Anyway

WOMEN, if you mark them well,  
Have a sorry tale to tell,  
Gauds and glamour, tears and tea:  
I've found them good enough for me.

## *Malediction*

**M**AY he who has aroused my hate  
Go to his end with tranquil gait  
After long life of easy days  
Remote from blame or well-earned praise,  
And let there in his larder be  
All kinds of tasty luxury.  
Let gentle servants wake him when  
The lazy clock stands after ten,  
Let liveried lackey ope his door,  
Let thick rugs lie upon his floor.  
And never let him eager know  
Upon his face the lash of snow.  
Oh, may he never wait the morn  
Wrestling an angel yet unborn;  
So when he dies on his great bed  
Let none be there to wish him dead.

## *Defiance*

SOME one will say  
(And his brow will grow darker),  
"The best of his verses  
Don't touch Dottie Parker."

Others who hold me  
A gay and a flip man  
Will place me ten notches  
Below Arthur Lippmann.

In face of these critics  
I'm thumbing my nose,  
My verse may be tripe  
But I wrote as I chose.





## Date Due

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McDougall, Joseph Easton  
If you know what I mean

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